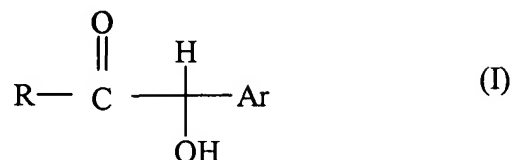


Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Original) A process of preparing an aromatic α -hydroxy ketone of formula (I)



wherein R is H or C₁₋₆ alkyl, and Ar is aryl, wherein said aryl optionally contains one or more heteroatoms chosen from N, S and O, and optionally consists of fused rings, and said alkyl and aryl are optionally substituted by 1 to 3 substituents chosen from C₁₋₃ alkyl, C₁₋₃ alkoxy, F, Cl, Br, I, OH, NH₂, CN, and NR₁R₂, wherein R₁ and R₂ can be independently H or C₁₋₄ alkyl, and said C₁₋₃ alkyl can be further substituted by a substituent chosen from F, Cl, Br, I, and OH; which process comprises reacting an aldehyde of formula (II)



with a 2-oxoacid of formula (III)



wherein Ar and R in formulae (II) and (III) have the meaning defined for formula (I); in the presence of a mixture comprising 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase chosen from AHAS and TSAS,

and thiamin pyrophosphate (TPP), flavine adenine dinucleotide (FAD), metal ions, and a buffer.

2. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein one of the enantiomers of the compound of formula (I) is formed in excess.
3. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the aromatic α -hydroxy ketone is chiral aromatic α -hydroxy ketone.
4. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the compound of formula (I) is (*R*)-arylacyl carbinol.
5. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the 2-oxoacid is pyruvic acid.
6. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the 2-oxoacid is chosen from glyoxylic acid, 2-ketobutyric acid, and 2-ketovaleric acid.
7. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the aryl is chosen from phenyl, benzyl, naphthyl, furyl, pyridinyl and thienyl.
8. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the aldehyde is a substituted benzaldehyde.
9. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the aldehyde is benzaldehyde.
10. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the compound of formula (I) is phenylacetyl carbinol (PAC).

11. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the compound of formula (I) is (*R*)-PAC.
12. (Original) A process according to claim 10, wherein PAC constitutes more than 95% of the products of the enzymatic reaction.
13. (Original) A process according to claim 10, wherein PAC constitutes more than 99% of the products of the enzymatic reaction.
14. (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein (*R*)-PAC constitutes more than 90% of PAC produced in the enzymatic reaction.
15. (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein (*R*)-PAC constitutes more than 95% of PAC produced in the enzymatic reaction.
16. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an enzyme of bacterial origin.
17. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an enzyme chosen from yeast enzyme, fungal enzyme, and plant enzyme.
18. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises a wild type protein.
19. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises a recombinant protein.

20. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an engineered protein.
21. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises a mutant protein.
22. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an AHAS enzyme.
23. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~, claim 1 wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an TSAS enzyme.
24. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~, claim 1 wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises AHAS isozyme I protein from *Escherichia coli*.
25. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises AHAS isozyme II protein from *Escherichia coli*.
26. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises TSAS from *Escherichia coli*.
27. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises a histidine-tagged protein.

28. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises specific directed mutants of AHAS II overexpressed in host cells.
29. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 25~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises a stabilized enzyme.
30. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 26~~ claim 1, wherein said 2-hydroxy-3-oxoacid synthase comprises an immobilized enzyme.
31. (Currently Amended) A biotransformation process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 27~~ claim 1, wherein all the components of the enzymatic reaction are added to the reaction mixture in one portion.
32. (Currently Amended) A biotransformation process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 27~~ claim 1, wherein some of the components of the enzymatic reaction are added to the reaction mixture in more portions or continually.
33. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein pH of the mixture is from 5 to 9.
34. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein pH of the mixture is from 6.5 to 7.5.
35. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the mixture comprises a buffer chosen from the group consisting of MES, BIS-TRIS, PIPES, BES, MOPS, TES, HEPES, TRIS, Tricine, Bicine, and phosphate.

36. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the buffer has a concentration between 0.01 M and 0.25 M.
37. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the aldehyde and the oxoacid are added to concentrations between 2 mM and 100 mM.
38. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein TPP and FAD are added to concentrations between 0.02 mM and 0.2 mM.
39. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein magnesium ions are added to a concentration between 0.2 mM and 2 mM.
40. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein DTT is added to a concentration between 0.1 mM and 2 mM.
41. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the enzyme is added to a concentration between 0.01 mg/ml and 1.0 mg/ml.
42. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the enzyme is added to a concentration between 0.1 and 10 U/ml.
43. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~claims 28 or 29~~ claim 28, wherein the temperature of the mixture is between 15 and 40°C.
44. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 40~~ claim 1, wherein said mixture comprises a water-miscible organic solvent

chosen from 2-propanol, dimethyl sulfoxide, dimethyl formamide, and acetamide, in concentrations from 0 to 50% (v/v).

45. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein pH of the mixture is from 5 to 9.
46. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein pH of the mixture is from 6.5 to 7.5.
47. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the mixture comprises a buffer chosen from the group consisting of MES, BIS-TRIS, PIPES, BES, MOPS, TES, HEPES, TRIS, Tricine, Bicine, and phosphate.
48. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the buffer has a concentration between 0.01 M and 0.25 M.
49. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the aldehyde and the oxoacid are added to concentrations between 2 mM and 100 mM.
50. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein TPP and FAD are added to concentrations between 0.02 mM and 0.2 mM.
51. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein magnesium ions are added to a concentration between 0.2 mM and 2 mM.
52. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein DTT is added to a concentration between 0.1 mM and 2 mM.
53. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the enzyme is added to a concentration between 0.01 mg/ml and 1.0 mg/ml.

54. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the enzyme is added to a concentration between 0.1 and 10 U/ml.
55. (New) A process according to claim 29, wherein the temperature of the mixture is between 15 and 40°C.